



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 13, 2002**

## **Supreme Court upholds Educational Opportunity Grant program**

**OLYMPIA** - The Washington Supreme Court today upheld the state's Educational Opportunity Grant financial aid program.

"This is great news for the financially needy students of Washington," said Marc Gaspard, executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, which administers the program. "Although this is one of the state's smaller programs, this means the nearly 1,000 students who currently receive financial aid through the EOG Program will be able to continue to work toward their degrees. For many of these students, the EOG means the difference between getting a degree or having to drop out of school."

The case stemmed from a 1995 lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of Mary Gallwey, a professor at Washington State University. Gallwey contended the program, which provides financial aid grants to needy students in certain counties in Washington, violated the state and federal constitutions. The case challenged the use of the program funds at Washington's religiously affiliated colleges and universities.

In its defense, the state said the purposes of the program were entirely secular. The program stipulates that students accepting the grant funds can not be involved in programs that include religious worship, exercise or instruction, or pursue a degree in religious, seminarian or theological academic studies.

The court determined that the program satisfied constitutional provisions that apply to higher education institutions. In its conclusion, the court said the EOG Program was designed to meet the critical needs of "placebound" financially needy students, not to foster religion or religious worship.

The Legislature enacted the grant program in 1990 based on findings that:

- Washington's participation rate for upper-division course work was 10 percent below the national average;
- The state's largest population growth was occurring in areas surrounding Seattle that were not served by a public university; and

- There was a significant disparity in access to upper-division course work based on geography.

The court also noted that funds associated with this program are paid out directly to financially needy students who then independently choose the institution that is most accessible.

Currently, the program serves about 1,000 students in the six public colleges and universities in the state, as well as eleven private institutions. The state Legislature earmarked \$2.9 million to help students in the 2002-03 academic year.

###

Contact: Barbara Dunn, 360.753.7817 or via email at [barbarad@hecb.wa.gov](mailto:barbarad@hecb.wa.gov)  
<<mailto:barbarad@hecb.wa.gov>>

**(Program information follows)**

# **The Educational Opportunity Grant Program**

## **Program overview**

The Educational Opportunity Grant (EOG) program provides \$2,500 annual grants to encourage financially needy, placebound students to complete a bachelor's degree. To be considered placebound, students must be unable to continue their education due to family or work commitments, health concerns, financial need, or other similar factors.

To be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

- Have demonstrated financial need based on a federal financial aid application (Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA);
- Be a Washington resident and live in one of 13 counties (Benton, Clark, Cowlitz, Franklin, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Skamania, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, Walla Walla or Yakima);
- Be unable to continue their education without this grant due to family or work commitments, health concerns, financial need, or other similar factors;
- Have junior standing through either an associate degree or transferable credits;
- Be enrolled at an eligible school that is different from the one attended during the prior academic year; and
- Not be involved in a program that includes religious worship, exercise or instruction, or pursuing a degree in religious, seminarian, or theological academic studies.

Students can use the grants at all eligible four-year colleges and universities in Washington, except the branch campuses of the University of Washington and Washington State University. They may renew their grants for one additional year.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the program. In 2002-03, the state earmarked \$2.9 million to help more than 1,000 students.

Consider the following:

- More than 90 percent of EOG recipients transferred from community colleges;
- More than 80 percent are single parents or self-supporting students;
- Their median family income is less than \$20,000; and
- Their average age is 31.

**A Look at Where EOG Recipients Enroll  
(2000-2001)**

<b>COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>NO. OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>EXPENDITURES(\$)</b>
University of Washington	77	191,697
Washington State University	147	367,396
Central Washington University	182	453,805
Eastern Washington University	136	340,230
The Evergreen State College	43	107,298
Western Washington University	34	84,167
<b>Total Public</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>1,544,593</b>
Bastyr College	16	40,003
Cornish College	1	2,500
Gonzaga University	36	88,750
Heritage College	58	143,750
Pacific Lutheran University	96	240,000
St. Martin's College	36	90,000
Seattle Pacific University	27	67,503
Seattle University	52	130,837
University of Puget Sound	19	47,955
Whitman College	1	2,500
Whitworth College	10	25,000
<b>Total Independent</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>878,798</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>2,423,391</b>